EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 3RD NOVEMBER 2015

SUBJECT: CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S ANNUAL LIBRARY STANDARDS ASSESSMENT 2014-2015

REPORT BY: CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee of the progress made by the County Borough Library Service in seeking to meet the 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, Core Entitlements, and Qualitative Indicators, during 2014-15. This is the 1st year of the new Framework that will operate until March 31st 2017 and includes a number of new assessment areas with a focus on outcome and qualitative measures in addition to more traditional standards of attainment.

1.2 A guide to the new features contained in the 2014-2017 Welsh Government Public Library Standards Framework is included for Scrutiny Member awareness as **Appendix 1**.

1.3 Education for Life Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse this report and forward to Cabinet for consideration and formal approval.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Caerphilly County Borough was assessed as meeting 17 of the 18 Welsh Government Core Entitlements for Public Library Service provision, with one Entitlement met in part. The Borough Library Service was deemed as meeting 6 of the 7 Quality Indicators for Wales with none failed in totality and was described by the Assessors and Reference Panel as being a "strong performer" within Wales achieving a number of indicators that other Council's have failed to achieve. A copy of the formal Welsh Government assessment is included with this report as **Appendix 2**.

2.2 The new Welsh Government Public Library Standards Framework, its 5th, will operate from 2014-2017 and includes a range of core entitlements, quality indicators, qualitative data in addition to traditional input and output information, and a number of case study submissions at customer and Authority level. Four strategic themes form the core of the Assessment regime, namely:

- Customers and Communities
- Access for all
- Learning for life
- Leadership and development

The Welsh Government Standards Reference Group in assessing Caerphilly County Borough Library Service's submission for 2014-2015 identified the following areas of particular strength in the Authority's performance for the year under review:

- A survey of child and young adult customers undertaken in July 2014 rated the Borough Library Service 9.3 out of 10 for overall satisfaction, the second highest performance recorded among Welsh Local Authorities.

- Caerphilly County Borough Library Service had the 2nd highest level of visits per capita in Wales while 28.8% of the population are active borrowers, the best performance by a Council in Wales.

- The Borough Library Service's percentage of supplied book and non-book requests delivered to customers within 15 days was ranked 2nd in Wales.

- The Borough Council's total expenditure per capita on Public Library provision for 2014-2015 was above the median for Wales and the average cost per visit to a Caerphilly Library facility at £2.45 was below the median, suggesting that the Authority is operating efficiently.

The assessment group stated that "Caerphilly Library Service is a strong performer and is to be congratulated on its high visits and active borrower figures per capita. It is also meeting several targets which most other authorities are failing".

2.3   The Welsh Government Public Libraries Standards Reference Group noted a number of other areas of performance that were below the average for Wales and that require further attention by the Borough Council in continuing to deliver a strong performing service in the future, these included:

- Informal training for customers on a per capita basis is the lowest recorded for Wales, though this may be an instance of under reporting by the Borough Council as it is a new measure.

- Public Computer Services appear to be relatively under-utilised by customers.

- One third of the Borough Council's static Libraries do not offer customers Wi-Fi access.

2.4   Overall the assessment of the County Borough Council's Public Library Service for 2014-2015 is positive and complementary of the investment and strategic leadership the Authority has provided over a number of years.

3.   LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1   Public Libraries contribute to a number of the Council's core priorities including the key themes of the Community Strategy and the Single Integrated Plan, 'Caerphilly Delivers'.

3.2   The 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2014-2017, assists the Authority in working toward its Strategic Equalities Objectives, in particular:

- Strategic Equality Plan SEO 3- Physical Access
- Strategic Equality Plan SEO 4- Communication
- Strategic Equality Plan SEO 5- Engagement and Participation

3.3   The 5th Strategic Framework of Public Library Standards, 2014-2017, entitled 'Libraries making a difference' links closely with 'Libraries Inspire: The strategic development framework for Welsh libraries 2012-2016'.

4.   THE REPORT

4.1   The Welsh Government assessment of Caerphilly County Borough Council's performance against the 5th Standards Framework for Public Libraries in Wales during 2014-2015, concluded that:

"Caerphilly library service is a strong performer and is to be congratulated on its high visits and active borrower figures per capita. It is also meeting several targets which most other authorities are failing."

4.2   Caerphilly County Borough Library Service is assessed as meeting 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full and one that relates to online services and Wi-Fi access, in part (**see Appendix 2**).

4.3   There are seven quality indicators that have target measures associated to them of which Caerphilly County Borough Library Service is deemed to achieve six in full and one in part that relates to online service and ICT access.

4.4   Detailed below are areas of the assessment Framework that deserve specific mention either in respect of the good performance achieved by the Borough Library Service or where activity levels or other metrics fall below the average for Wales in 2014-2015.

4.4.1   Highlighted areas of good or excellent performance when compared to other Welsh Local Authorities

Performance indicator	Caerphilly	*Rank*	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	*1 / 10*	93%	98%	99%
d) child rating out of ten	9.3	*2 / 9*	8.0	9.2	9.4
QI 6 Library use					
a) visits per capita	5,826	*2*	2,637	4,177	5,955
c) active borrowers per capita	288	*1*	71	155	288
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	317	*5*	21	192	464
QI 12 Supply of requests					
a) % available within 7 days	78%	*4*	62%	69%	81%
b) % available within 15 days	91%	*2*	74%	84%	94%
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	**£15,728***	*7*	£8,966	**£14,054**	£20,796
QI 15 Cost per visit	**£2.45***	*17*	£2.07	**£2.87**	£3.92
QI 16 Opening hours *(see note)*					
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.0%	*1*	0.0%	0.02%	0.52%

Note: Rankings have been reversed, so that 1st is the lowest scoring Authority.

Caerphilly County Borough Library Services performance is either above the median for Wales highlighting the level of investment committed by the Authority or among the most efficient in respect of spend per physical visitor.

Customer satisfaction

Caerphilly County Borough Council's Public Library Service remains popular among the Authority's resident population and judged by users of all ages as offering excellent customer care. This sustained performance that has been noteworthy for a number of years and reflects both the quality of the Council's Library facilities and the resources, skills and care of its staffing complement. The high rating among children and young adults is particularly complementary and the results of a recent Adult customer survey should be known shortly allowing for a more complete and current picture of end user views.

Library Usage

Caerphilly County Borough Public Library Service has maintained recent improvements in the numbers of physical visitors to its 18 sites and is ranked 2nd within Wales. The number of residents attending events in Libraries has also improved on 2013-2014 activity levels and is now ranked within the top quartile for Wales. The high visitor levels and active user percentage noted by the assessors reflects well on the investment that the Authority has made in renovating, relocating, and improving Library sites since 2007 and the quality of resources and provision available.

Satisfying customer requests for resources and specific materials effectively and in a timely fashion

The Borough Library Service has a well-developed book and non-book delivery service and participates in the South Wales book courier offer '*Books4U*' which provides customers with access to 12 Local Authority Library collections. Performance with regards to reservations for specific titles reflects the quality of overall offer currently available, however as book fund reductions begin to impact linked to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) requirements performance in this area of assessment with become at best more challenging to sustain and at worst will see significant reductions in achievement.

Efficiency

The best performing Local Authority in Wales achieves a cost per visit of £2.07 pence while Caerphilly, ranked 17th lowest, has recorded an average expense of some £2.45. Caerphilly Library Service is therefore among the more efficient and effective providers within Wales for 2014-2015 when the level of physical visitors to Borough sites is considered.

Access

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service has ensured that the level of emergency non-opening of its 18 static library sites has not been a significant concern during 2014-15 this has likewise been the case for its Housebound Library provision. Caerphilly is ranked the best performing Authority in Wales for this measure and has been commended by the Standards Reference Group Assessors for this outcome. Performance against this measure in future years will become increasingly difficult to sustain as a number of the Borough's facilities move to single staffing as part of tapered reductions in opening times scheduled to commence from October 2015 onward, linked to the Council's MTFP obligations.

4.4.2 Highlighted areas of below average performance

Performance indicator	Caerphilly	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) new skills	55%	9 / 9	55%	72%	93%
c) health and well-being	29%	9 / 9	29%	58%	91%
QI 4 User training					
a) attendances per capita	22	12	2	24	278
c) informal training per capita	16	21 / 21	16	162	484
QI 6 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	599	18	212	923	2,449
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	317	5	21	192	464
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public					
a) equipment	28%	20	23%	36%	70%

Making a difference (Skills and well-being)

The two qualitative measures included in this area of the 5th Standards Framework are new and each Authority has developed their own methods of capturing and reporting customer comments on skill development and use of health and well-being resources in their Libraries. Caerphilly's performance against these indicators though appearing low within the authorities to return responses for 2014-2015 should be considered against this context and that the reporting submitted has been based on relatively limited survey work to date and that more detailed questionnaire activity is planned for 2015-2016.

Customer training

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service is slightly below the median for attendance per capita at user training activities and deemed the lowest in Wales for informal delivery. As noted above both these areas are also new indicators of performance included in the Welsh Government Standards Framework portfolio for the first time. Caerphilly Library Service are working with partners, including Communities 2.0, Get Caerphilly Online, and the Borough Adult Education Service to increase formal training while the recording of informal activity will be reviewed to ensure no under estimating of activity is taking place.

It is important to note that with the move to single staff Library premises at smaller sites from October 2015 that mediated training support for customers will become more challenging and activity levels in this area may decline as an outcome.

Library virtual usage and utilisation of public Internet terminals

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service provides residents with access to 250 Public Internet Terminals across its 18 static sites this is among the highest number for any Welsh Authority. The level of utilisation, at 28%, though appearing low, is 3% higher than in 2013-2014 and the high number of Internet Terminals available that contribute to the levels of continuous occupancy recorded needs to be considered in assessing this performance. Promotion of e-digital services and computer usage are strategic priorities for the Borough Library Service over the 2014-2017 period as noted in the Authority's recently adopted three year plan.

4.5   Impact Studies and Contribution to Borough Council strategic priority themes

Four case studies on the impact and value of the Borough Library Service were submitted and assessed by the Welsh Government Reference Group panel. The case studies were as follows:

- Support at Abercarn Library for adult learning and job seeking activities.
- Activities for young people at Bargoed Hanbury Chapel Library, a Harry Potter themed night.
- A 'Knit and Natter' group at Llanbradach Library that has supported one older customer to find her way back into the local community.
- The use of the Borough's virtual Library Services by customers with mobility issues who felt they could no longer access the physical resources.

A statement on the contribution the Borough Library Service makes to the Authority's Single Integrated Plan in addition to a number of Welsh Government strategies, notably in the areas of Poverty, National Literacy Programme, Early Years provision, Community Learning, and Library delivery, was also submitted as part of the service Standards return for 2014-2015. Please **see Appendix 3** for the impact case studies and strategic statement.

5.   EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1   An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required because the issues covered by this report are for information purposes only, seeking to update Members with regard to the Authority's performance in respect of Welsh Government Public Library Standards; therefore the Council's full EIA process does not need to be applied.

6.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1   The cost to implement free Wi-Fi access at the remaining 6 sites, Quality Indicator 10b, that have no provision at present is approximately £25k. No capital funding has been identified to undertake these enhancements to date.

7.   PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1   There are no personnel implications linked to this report.

8.   CONSULTATIONS

8.1   The views of all consultees have been included within this report.

9.   RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1   Members note the information received from the County Borough Library Service with regard to its performance for 2014-2015 in working towards achieving the 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2014-2017.

9.2   Members should also note the Welsh Government's Public Library Standard Reference Group assessment of this performance **See Appendix 2 and 3.** The Authority's attainment of 17 Core Entitlements and 6 Quality Indicators that have target levels of attainment.

9.3   That the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee endorses the Welsh Government Public Library Standards Annual Report 2014-2015 and forward to Cabinet for approval.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1   Consult and seek the views of the Scrutiny Committee to meet the requirements of the Welsh Government Public Library Standards by 2017.

10.2   To inform Education for Life Scrutiny Members of the progress achieved by the County Borough Library Service in meeting the requirements of the 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2014-2017.

11.   STATUTORY POWER

11.1   Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

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Background Papers:
Education for Life Scrutiny Committee 4th November 2014.
Public Library Standards in Wales – Annual Library Update Report 2013-14

Cabinet 12th November 2014.
Public Library Standards in Wales – Annual Library Update Report 2013-14

Education for Life Scrutiny Committee 8th July 2014. Caerphilly Library Service Strategy 2014-2017

Cabinet 16th July 2014. Caerphilly Library Service Strategy 2014-2017

Appendices**:**

APPENDIX 1:   HOW GOOD IS YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE? A SUMMARY GUIDE TO THE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN WALES
APPENDIX 2:   WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS 2014-17 CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2014-15
APPENDIX 3(A)   THE 5TH QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARIES APRIL 2014 TO MARCH 2017: ANNUAL RETURN PRO-FORMA: YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2015
APPENDIX 3(B)   WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS – CASE STUDIES